

Following is a speech by the Rt. Hon. Lyttelton,  
Minister of Production, M.P. for the Aldershot  
Division of Hants, at the annual Meeting of the  
Aldershot Conservative Association at Farnborough  
Town Hall this afternoon.

I think that it is necessary for us who are Conservatives sometimes to turn from the great national picture and to look at it from the point of view of Conservatives, and also to think how the greatest national party has contributed and will contribute all its immense influence and resources both to the waging of war and towards building the better future which we are all united in trying to secure for our people.

I said once - and I was then referring to post-war matters - that we must look to a marriage between the organising power of the state and the free play of individual enterprise, and this applies also to the waging of war. I was saying the other day in the House of Commons that in the manufacture of munitions of war of all kinds - ships, aircraft and army equipment - the policy of the Government was to use private enterprise as the agent and the medium, and that this policy was a settled policy. Of course, in wartime the state interferes with almost everything, but on the whole interferes reluctantly, and it does so because it cannot discharge its responsibilities by allowing un-co-ordinated and unregulated action to take place by the individual citizen.

I think we should be wrong as Conservatives to resist on principle all ideas that the public control - and I may say this is quite distinct from state control - that the public control of certain common services should never be extended. I think they should be, but by far the biggest part of business enterprise should be left to individual effort.

When we think of all the great periods in our history, we nearly always associate them with an outstanding individual and not with an outstanding political system. In fact many of our greatest achievements and our greatest contributions to the history of mankind have been made under a political system which would bring a blush to the cheeks of any modern elector today.

We think of Queen Elizabeth and Sir Francis Drake, of Marlborough and Pitt, and Nelson, and of the Duke of Wellington - to come nearer to our own time; and it is on the ability to keep alive the spirit of individual adventure, the ability to break away from the customs and thoughts of the mass of people and to inject into public opinion new fanciful, unorthodox ideas, that the vigour of national life depends.

It is not by filling up forms, wearing utility suits, taking our opinions like patent medicine from the printed word of the newspapers or the periodicals or the Party pamphlets, or absorbing ready made opinions from that very impartial publicist the B.B.C. The attitude of mind which we must have is to question all things and to apply our individual minds to their solution. Nothing could be more ghastly than a uniform cow-like public opinion, which is willing to browse on the artificially fertilised fields and chew the cud of common pasture while being strenuously milked by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

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The point that I am trying to make is that, while we must expect all the discipline, regimentation, all the high taxation and interference with our private lives in the cause of the war, we must be careful - and above all as Conservatives - not to fall into a frame of mind of thinking that these things by themselves are ends, or that by them the cause of civilisation is advanced.

The Duke of Wellington had his windows broken, and a damn good thing too! I feel sure that at the time he was in the right, but it nevertheless shows a healthy disregard of ready made ideas and a healthy disrespect of persons that such a thing could have happened to one who would have every claim to be the most distinguished citizen of his time.

I do not think we are at all an envious people. I think that in the mentality of the Englishman there is not on the whole a disgust at the greater prosperity of his neighbour. I think we are fixed in these matters upon what is essential, which is that as far as we possibly can we should make the lot of every man tolerable, and it is a most unfortunate fact for our Socialist friends that rich people who accumulate capital and savings and who push their money out into development are necessary to the prosperity of the state. But that prosperity is not being increased by the selfish and anti-social actions of these people.

I say I do not think we are an envious people. I always think of the parable in the Bible which caused me a good deal of cogitation when I was a boy. It always appeared to me grossly unjust that the people who had borne the heat and burden of the day received the same rate for their labours as those who were brought in much later on, but I came early in life to glean that the moral to be drawn from this parable was a great one, namely that one should not worry what other people are doing, whether one's neighbour has got a better suit of clothes, a better radio or a better motor-car than one self, but be content to see that one has a fairly good suit of clothes, a fairly good radio and a fairly good motor-car oneself.

Before I close upon this subject, let me tell you that much of our prosperity - and I have referred so far more to our warriors and statesmen than to our business men - much of our prosperity has depended upon the financing of long shots, the backing of commercial horses at very long odds. Now the State is the worst possible punter in this type of market.

The Civil Servants and the Ministers whom they advise and whom they sometimes but not always control, are answerable from day to day, from budget to budget, from bill to bill, to a highly critical and sometimes recalcitrant court - Parliament. Nothing could be more satisfactory to an aspiring political opponent than to be able to assert that a Minister has lost money over an enterprise which, in the cold light of a November afternoon in the House of Commons, appears fantastic.

Yet it is upon these things that our commercial prosperity has been largely built. There would have been no Rio Tinto Co., no Hudson's Bay Company, no Courtaulds, and I do not think there would have been a steam engine or sulphate of ammonia or a Spitfire, if the State, with its necessarily cautious approach to all things that are new, had been the only tradesman, the only author of our enterprise.

It is very rare that the State has the enterprise to buy the Suez Canal shares as Disraeli did, or to invest largely in the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, as the Government has within our immediate memory.

I hope you will not think that some of these general reflections are out of place, but before I sit down I think we should, as we have been enjoined by the Prime Minister, look to the immediate task which lies to our hands. We cannot do so without a deep sense of thankfulness for the change in our fortunes which has gradually dawned upon us.

I said in the constituency at one time that the 80 days that then lay in front of us would be some of the most critical in our history, and I see no reason to retract one word of what I said. Those 80 days ended somewhere at the beginning of October, but since the 23rd October the first gleam of sunshine could be seen through the clouds, and although there are now still many storm clouds which overhand our future, the rays of that sun are burning brightly, the spring of our

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liberation from the horrors and chances of war has begun, and we shall soon be in the high summer of military success.

The heroic resistance of our Russian allies and the immense contribution which they have made to our own cause should not cloud our eyes when we look at our own achievements. The advance of the Eighth Army, an advance which is unique in the annals of military history; the fact that much more than half the German Air Force is engaged against the Royal Air Force aided by the Americans; the control of the seas and the source of supplies for carrying on the war, and the heavy and relentless bombing of the German industrial machine, are contributions which in the sun should not be put in an unfavourable light, even compared with those of the Russian armies, who are engaging so large a part of the German land forces.

In spite of all this we must bring more of our immense resources to bear to relieve the pressure on Russia and to accelerate the day of victory. It is upon these matters that the attention of His Majesty's Government is continuously fixed under the leadership of the Prime Minister. I think that anybody looking at the map of the war would realise that the strategy and tactics which are now being employed are the correct and indeed the classic conception of the strategy of the world's leading maritime powers. It may be that we have only begun; but it is as sure that this is the beginning as the end itself is sure.

The Conservative Party can have every reason to be proud - and after all it is still the greatest political force in the country - of the part **that it** has played.

I would just say that fortunately for this country it is quite unnecessary to look to the supporters of this Party or that for the great civic and indeed military virtues which have always been the attributes of our countrymen, but we have within this glorious story a right to claim for our own Party that share which is their due.

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